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Dedicated to educating the public and to fostering and adoption of companion rabbits. 781-431-1211 or www.rabbitnetwork.org.

RABBIT TRACKS

Winter 2004

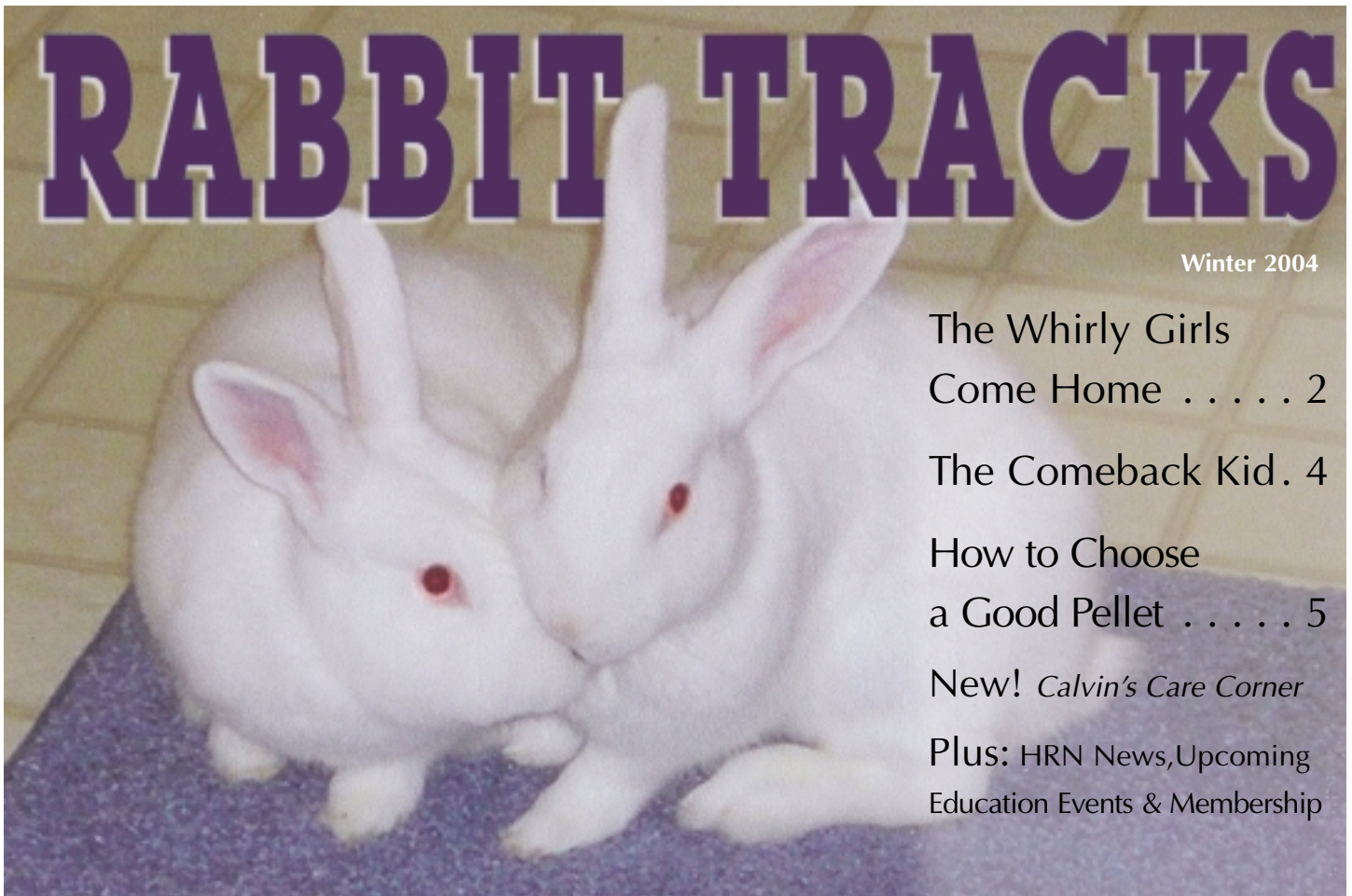
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The Whirly Girls Come Home

by Ross S. Nichols

My wife loves rabbits. If you had the opportunity to look around our home, you would notice that there is a single predominant theme to the items that decorate it. Carved from wood or soapstone, shaped from steel, cast from iron, sewn from cloth they are unique in their own way, but they all share something in common. Rabbits abound and I have lost count of how many there are to be seen, simply sitting on the living room couch. In July of 2003, the "collection" was made complete with our adoption of two adorable sisters named Bianca and Emily.

Aside from a few fish and a hamster, our home has been devoid of pets. My wife grew up in a household where some family members had pet allergies, so hairy pets were never the norm at her house. She did have a rabbit once when she was four-years-old, but due to the allergies, it had to go live with another family, shortly after its arrival. As for me, my family always had cats running around when I was growing up. After we married, my wife and I spent years thinking about getting a cat or a dog but could never come to a final decision.

Near the beginning of last year, my wife mentioned the possibility of adopting a couple of rabbits, in part because she missed having one as a child and because she finds them so adorable. After my

wife did some research on organizations that adopt out rabbits, and after talking to representatives from a couple of organizations in our area, we decided to visit the home of foster mom Cherryl. We chose to visit her, primarily because she was custodian to three lop-eared brothers that we had seen on the House Rabbit Network's website.

We had decided early on that we wished to adopt at least two bonded rabbits, so they could



The Whirly Girls sharing a piece of parsley.

keep each other company while my wife and I were at work. After seeing the brothers' photo on the website, we had nearly fallen in love right then and there. We went to visit the brothers and were immediately smitten with them because they were so adorable and affectionate, even to us as strangers. Unfortunately, practicality reared its ugly head, as we found them to be rather large bunnies at 14 lbs. apiece, and we live in a relatively small house. We didn't

feel that we could provide them with the type of home that they deserved.

While we were there, Cherryl showed us all of the rabbits that she was taking care of. We were amazed at the vast number she took care of in her home, and the dedication that she showed to each and every one. In addition to her own pair of rabbits, two birds and a couple of guinea pigs, Cherryl was caring for three sick

rabbits in her first floor living space, and she had an additional 15-20 foster bunnies housed in her basement.

It was during the initial visit to Cherryl's house that we first saw the two little white bunnies that would eventually steal our hearts. We learned

that Cherryl had nicknamed them The Whirly Girls, because each time they were to be fed, the two sisters would start chasing each other around in a little circle, nose to tail, until their food dish was placed on the floor. This is a tradition that they continue to this day, and it is an endearing treat for my wife and me each morning and evening.

As we progressed through the final adoption process, Cherryl was most helpful in giving us

information on how to care for rabbits, and pointers on ways to make our home suitable for their arrival. She explained their eating and hygiene habits, as well as behaviors to watch out for, that might signal a health problem. Cheryl showed us options for building a rabbit cage to help keep them comfortable and safe while we are away during the day.

Having grown up with cats in the house, I never thought I would encounter a pet that is more suited to indoor habitation than a cat. I learned quickly that given the proper "bunny-proofing" to an area of your home, rabbits are more pleasant housemates than any cat I ever encountered.

Before we adopted the rabbits I never would have imagined the difference in personality that each of them displays. While having two white rabbits can make it difficult to tell them apart at a distance, they each possess unique identifying physical characteristics, as well as as distinctive personalities.

Emily, who was originally named Lilian, is an adventurous little sprite. She is an explorer and daredevil, and sports a seemingly rebellious



Being mischievous!

little tuft of hair atop her head, that looks remarkably like a Mohawk. She is the first one to look into new areas of the house and the more inde-

pendent one. She will occasionally submit to being petted, but for the most part, she is content to be off on her own. Surprisingly, despite her expressed distaste for being petted, she is also the only one of the two that will give "Bunny Kisses", in that she likes to lick any hand that is offered to her.

Bianca is our happy little princess with cute little chubby cheeks. She likes nothing better than to lounge around, be it in the penthouse level of her cage, or on the floor in our dining room or kitchen. She will gladly accept head and back rubs while she reclines in her royal domain, and is most curious only when it seems that Emily has found something, usually a toy or treat, which she has missed. Bianca is also our jumpy bun. She loves the little rug by our back door and spends lots of her free time doing her bucking bronco imitation on it. Even after we purchased a larger section of carpet for her to jump around on and placed



Emily & Bianca playing on the penthouse level of their condo.

it in the middle of the floor, Bianca is still most likely to gravitate to the little rug by the door.

Today, I cannot imagine our home without our two precious and precocious little fluffy white buns. Each moment spent playing with or caring for them makes me glad for the day that the whirly girls came home.



***“Until one has loved
an animal, a part of
one’s soul remains
unawakened.”***

– Anatole France

The Comeback Kid

The Story of Hubert's Mysterious Illness and Amazing Recovery

by *Cherryl Reinhardt*

This is a story about Hubert, a 10-pound New Zealand White. Hubert was pulled from a Boston shelter about five years ago. He has never been adopted. Hubert is a large, all-white bun, with chubby cheeks and pink (also referred to as red) eyes. Many people shy



Hubert

away from a pink-eyed rabbit, thinking they look freaky. But once you fall in love with the bun's personality, the pink eyes are no longer an issue. Hubert has another strike against him; he somehow has always managed to soil his beautiful white fur whenever he urinates. A loving, devoted caretaker could manage Hubie's urination problems, but so far no one has come forward to adopt him.

Recently, Hubert unexpectedly lost the use of his back legs. An X-ray provided no diagnosis. His attending

vet recommended euthanasia. Hubie was hospitalized for three days and came home to live in my bathroom. His litter box was now a large box top with one side cut off, so he could pull himself inside. His floor was padded with wee-wee pads and non-slip bath rugs, overlaid with imitation lamb's wool pads. Because he had trouble hauling his large body around, two sets of food and water bowls were provided. Hay was placed in heaps on his rugs.

For a week-and-a-half, Hubie was miserable. He lay on his side and peed where he was, wetting himself. Twice a day he was cleaned up. Baytril Otic was applied to his urine scalded skin, then a generous amount of Balmex was applied. Nine days after the onset of his disability,

Hubie came to accept his disabled body. He was starting to act like his old self again.

Then, tiny miracles started to happen. Hubert was pulling himself up and actually sitting. He started to regain control of his left leg. Then his right leg, the urine scalded one, started to move more normally. Then one day Hubert hopped. Not just once, but three times! Two days later a gate had to be installed to confine him to the bathroom, because he kept hopping out. It is hoped that he will

soon be well enough to rejoin the other buns in the foster area, having made his remarkable recovery in less than one month.

Hubie's illness has taught me some valuable lessons:

1. After a catastrophic incident, don't think euthanasia is the only option.
2. Give the bun time to adjust to his new role in life. His attitude toward his disability just might surprise you.
3. Make sure the bun receives all necessary medications, no matter how grumpy he gets at you.
4. Listen to and watch your bun. He will tell you what he needs and when he needs it.
5. Call bun caretakers and experienced bun owners for support. Suzanne Trayhan, Christine Bennett and Suzanne Rubins provided much moral support and valuable knowledge on caring for a disabled rabbit.
6. Be prepared to accept that the bun might become disabled again and end up living permanently in your bathroom!

And, most importantly,

7. Educate a veterinarian who suggests that euthanasia is the only viable option.



How to Choose a Good Pellet

by Suzanne Trayhan

Pet stores abound with a variety of pellets for your rabbit. While many people feel that they are all good, this couldn't be further from the truth. Companies realize that the average person, and average pet store employee, haven't a clue on how to determine a good pellet from a bad one. Here are some things for you to look at.

Protein: In general, the lower the protein level, the better. I try to get a pellet that is 14% protein. You can go up to 16%, but I wouldn't go any higher than that. There is one exception to this rule; long-haired breeds such as angoras, jersey wooleys, etc., need more protein for their long fur. They should have a protein level of 16%.

Fiber: The higher this number is, the better. I try to get at least 25%, but make sure you get at least 20%.

Fat: Rabbits should have very little fat in their diets. Aim for a brand that is 1-1.5% fat. Unfortunately, there are brands that are 5% fat. This is way too high for your house rabbit.

Calcium: Here you want a low number, below 1%. For most rabbits, around 1% is adequate. However, if your rabbit has bladder, sludge, or kidney problems, you will want to make this number as low as possible. There are some brands that are .5% calcium.

No Junk!: Too many brands come with treat foods in them. They may have beans, nuts, or pieces of dried fruit. This is nothing more than junk food for your rabbit and may actually cause harm. You should always avoid these products.

Ingredients: Some people think a timothy based hay is better for your rabbit than one that is alfalfa

based. Either way, I would place more emphasis on the numbers above. In general, the timothy based pellets are better, but there are many good alfalfa based pellets too.

It can be difficult to find a pellet that matches all of the requirements. In that case, try to choose one that is as close as possible. Focus on the factors that are most important to your needs. If you have a rabbit with kidney/sludge problems, then get a low calcium number. If your rabbit is obese, concentrate on low fat and high fiber. For rabbits with gut problems, I would want high fiber. Most importantly, remember to stick to a straight pellet, without any of the "treats".



Welcome!
My name
is Calvin,
and this
is my new
column.
I wanted
to host
a feature
where
folks could
share clever

tips and solutions that make having
a house rabbit easier. If you would

like to submit an entry for this
forum, please send an email to
berben@comcast.net (feel free
to include a picture if it helps
to explain your tip). If your tip
is selected to appear in an
upcoming issue, you will win
a "thank you" prize.



This issue's contributor is David
Berwind with his technique for
feeding Critical Care mash in
modified 3 cc syringes.

Critical Care for Herbivores (by
Oxbow) is a powdered food mix
that we use as a supplemental food
for our rabbit who no longer eats
hay nor greens. She needs the fiber
roughage, vitamins, minerals, and
calories that this mix offers. We make
the mix with water AND fresh
pineapple to give her the active
papain enzyme in the fruit, plus
the extra nutrients and calories
it offers. Besides, what rabbit can
resist fresh pineapple! (Papain
breaks up the mucus that holds

fur masses together in the stomach. As she lacks sufficient indigestible fiber in her diet that would push fur through her system, the papain helps to combat the problem of fur bunching up in her guts. There is no active papain enzyme in canned pineapple.)

Buy a pineapple and prepare it. Cut off the leafy crown, then with the pineapple standing, sliver off the outside layer in sheets. Lie the pineapple down and cleave into fourths. Fresh pineapple is slippery, so be careful cutting out the fibery core area of each quarter. Cut the remaining fruit into 1-inch slices and keep it in a plastic container. Fresh-cut pineapple will stay good for a week in the fridge.

Consistency of the mash is important, as it must easily pipe into and dispense out of the tubes, so play with your proportions until you get a pliable mash that isn't runny or clumpy. In a blender, mix one cup of water with about nine chunks of pineapple. Hold the cover down, and pulse the blender until you get a frothy smoothie. It is important that there are no chunks left, as these may damage the bag used to pipe the mash into the tubes. Pour the fluid into a large bowl. Add one cup of Critical Care powder to the bowl. Combine with a spatula. When the mash is fully blended, transfer it to a plastic container. Once it sits for a while, the mash may get thicker, so add a little water to thin it out. Make

enough mash to last your rabbit about four days. It's better to make small batches. The Critical Care powder stays the freshest in your freezer. It takes under a half an hour to prepare a tub of mash—from the pineapple prep to the mash storage.

Your rabbit may eat the mash readily off a plate, but if your rabbit hesitates, you will need to "force feed" it. The mash is too thick to fit through a small tip, so modified syringes are helpful to



ease feeding. Start with a supply of 3 cc syringes, as they are a good size to fit in a small mouth (I prepared 16). I used a sharp kitchen knife to cut off the tapered end, leaving the wide, straight chamber of the syringe. I used an emery board to file off any rough plastic bits.

I use a heavier grade plastic sandwich bag as a piping bag for the mash. Cut off the corner of a bag so that the hole is just a bit smaller than the syringe tube opening. Fill the bag with mash to about a quarter full so it's a manageable amount in your hand. Pipe the

mash into the plunger end of the tubes, leaving a half cc space at the cut-off ends. (When you insert the plunger, it will take up that empty space.) Apply a very thin film of Vaseline to grease the black rubber of the plungers. Load the plungers into all the mash-filled syringes, and you're ready to feed your rabbit!

We discovered that our doe actually loves the mash, and she learned the routine of tube feeding, so

calling it "force feeding" is untrue. (For the first week, it was a battle, the second week less so, and by the third week, she cornered us demanding her tubes! We've tube fed her now for eight months, and it's a wonderful bonding activity.) She stands on a rug for stability and takes the tubes into her mouth and chews the mash once it's dispensed, tube by tube. Placing a hand on her shoulders stabilizes her neck

if she leans back while feeding, and it reinforces that she needs to stay with you until you're done feeding all the tubes. If she tries to leave, we can quickly hold her at the shoulders.

For clean up, we use a hard plastic mini spatula to pry the plungers out of the syringe tubes. A quick rinse under hot water is sufficient to keep the parts clean. A feeding session of 16 tubes takes about 15 minutes—from loading the tubes to post-feeding clean up.





Gustav and Gloria are a really cute pair. They've been in foster care for a while and would like to find their

Buns of the Month: Gustav & Gloria

forever home. They are devoted to each other and often seen snuggling. They are very cute together!

Gloria is extremely curious and can be a little in your face. She always runs to the edge of the cage for attention or to see what food you might have for her. Sometimes she is so eager for her food, that she may accidentally bite your hand. Not that

she is trying to bite, she is just too eager to get a bite of the food and your hand gets in the way! For this reason, she wouldn't be good for a family with young children.

Gustav is the more reserved of the two buns. He is fairly calm and will let you pet him once he knows you. They both have good litterbox habits and they love to run and play. They are about 3 years old and each weigh about 4.5 pounds.

Featured Rabbits for Adoption

HRN has a wide array of rabbits currently in foster care who are eagerly awaiting their own permanent, indoor homes and loving families. All have been spayed or neutered, socialized, and litterbox trained. Visit our website at www.rabbitnetwork.org to see all of them!

Ashton

3 lbs, 4 month, dwarf



Chuckie & Kaelin

6 lbs, 1 year, mix

Kaelin is a great bun who is not the least bit shy. She shows her love of play time by kicking up her heels. Kaelin loves her brother Chuckie very much. Chuckie is a fun bun who is a little on the shy side. He loves playing with his sister Kaelin and is very curious.

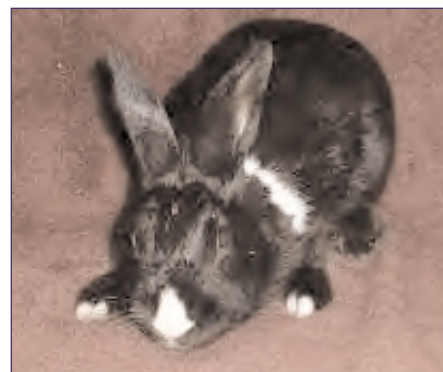


Gremlin

5 lbs, 1 year, Dutch Mix

Gremlin is a nice boy who loves to be petted. Just place your hand on him and he immediately flattens

to soak up the pets! He is fairly active and likes to play.



Harvey

7 lbs, 1 year, NZ Mix

Harvey is a very mellow, gentle bunny. He has a good disposition and likes to be petted. His litter box habits are good.



HRN News

February 2004

The House Rabbit Network received a generous donation from Wignall Animal Hospital of Dracut, MA. For their annual holiday fundraiser, Wignall hosted an event where pets had their pictures taken with Santa. In addition, several items were raffled off. The House Rabbit Network was given gift baskets full of supplies and several gift certificates – all totaling nearly \$1,200! Thank you Wignall Animal Hospital!

January 2004

Rabbits USA 2004 - 2005 is now available! Featured in the magazine is an article on rabbit toys written by HRN volunteer Kathy Smith. Also in this year's edition is an article on litterbox training in which Helena Chaikin and Suzanne Trayhan are quoted. This annual magazine by Fancy Publications is interesting for both the novice and veteran rabbit owner. Hoppy Reading!

January 2004 – The numbers are in! HRN had 147 adoptions in 2003! Bravo!

December 2003

The House Rabbit Network gets "two paws up" for its excellent web site! In the "Rabbits for Dummies Book" written by Audrey Pavia, HRN was listed as having one of the ten best rabbit web sites! Congratulations to all who contribute to our web site – your hard work is recognized!

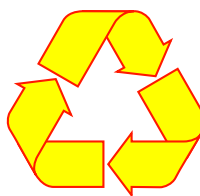
Upcoming Education Events

House Rabbit Network hosts information booths at various pet stores in eastern Massachusetts throughout the year. We will list the dates and locations of upcoming events on our web site. Please stop by and visit our booths! We are always happy to answer any questions you may have about rabbits and rabbit care. We will have with us information about adopting rabbits, listings of available rabbits, and some rabbits who are up for adoption. Please note that we do not adopt out on site.

- 🐾 Saturday, March 20
PetCo, Topsfield, MA
11 AM - 2 PM
- 🐾 Sunday, March 28
Winchester Starbucks,
Winchester, MA
- 🐾 Saturday, April 3
Especially for Pets, Sudbury, MA
10 AM - 2 PM
- 🐾 Saturday, April 17
PetCo, Plaistow, NH
11 AM - 2 PM
- 🐾 Saturday, April 24
PetCo, Topsfield, MA
11 AM - 2 PM
- 🐾 Saturday, September 11
Tufts Open House,
North Grafton, MA
10 AM - 3 PM

Attention All Recyclers!

One of our volunteers, Joanne Aja, has enabled HRN to begin



a recycling program with Recycle First. For each used laser toner or color inkjet cartridge returned to Recycle First, HRN will receive \$1.00. They will also accept toner cartridges from copiers (but NOT the plastic bottles with powdered toner). Recycle First has provided HRN with postage-paid envelopes and boxes for the return of these cartridges. Each envelope holds one color inkjet toner; each box holds 4–5 cartridges. If you have a printer at home or if you can grab the soon-to-be-discarded cartridges from work, please consider donating them to HRN for this fundraiser/recycling program! To ensure that HRN's account is correctly credited, it is necessary to use the envelopes and boxes supplied to HRN. (They have barcoded numbers on them that are scanned.) If you would like to participate, contact HRN for further assistance. info@rabbitnetwork.org or call (781) 431-1211. Thank you for helping both HRN and the planet!

Rabbit Awareness Flyer

HRN is dedicated to educating people about rabbits and their proper care. On the next page is a reproducible flyer on the importance of getting the facts before getting a rabbit. Please feel free to copy the flyer and post it anywhere you think it would be helpful. Often there is a community bulletin board in supermarkets, libraries, churches, post offices, schools, workplaces, veterinarians, etc. Thank you...

Join HRN...or...Please Renew Your Membership

*If you are not already a member, please join HRN!
Your membership dollars will go a long way towards improving the
lives of house rabbits everywhere. We thank you for your support!*



HRN Members: It's time to renew your membership!
Memberships run from April 1 to March 31 - so hop to it!

House Rabbit Network does not only foster rabbits, we also foster friendship, encouragement, and community. Please become a member and join our efforts, share your strengths, and be a part of our success. You will gain something personally rewarding while helping house rabbits both within and outside of our organization.

Make 2004 a year of change — for you and for house rabbits alike!

Contact HRN at info@rabbitnetwork.org or (781) 431-1211.



House Rabbit Network Membership and Ordering Form

Your membership donation is tax deductible and will be used for medical costs (spays/neuters, vet bills) and education expenses. All members will receive a copy of our newsletter, Rabbit Tracks, when it is published. Currently, we are publishing three issues per year.

Memberships run from April 1 to March 31 (donations received in Jan.–March will be credited for the following year). To join, fill out this page and mail it with your check (payable to the House Rabbit Network) to:

**House Rabbit Network
P.O. Box 2602
Woburn, MA 01888-1102**

Choose your membership level:

- Dwarf. \$ 15.00
- Mini Lop \$ 25.00
- New Zealand \$ 50.00
- Flemish Giant. \$ 100.00
- Mix (other) \$ _____

Choose your newsletter delivery preference:

- PDF format via email
(significant savings for HRN)
- Hard copy via U.S. Mail

Please send me _____ copies of
Rabbit Health in the 21st Century
at \$20.00 each \$ _____

Membership: \$ _____

Book(s): \$ _____

Other Contribution: \$ _____

Name _____

Street _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Total: \$ _____